

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

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October 26, 1983

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I was pleased to read, in the transcript of your October 18th press luncheon, your response to the question whether you would consider lifting some of the sanctions against Poland "in view of the recent developments that have occurred in release of prisoners." You replied that "we feel we must know that what they have done is really a change and really a restoration of the human rights that they heretofore have denied before we make these changes and find out that they have made a few little cosmetic gestures."

Clearly this condition has not been met. Solidarnosc, the only authentic voice of Poland's workers, remains outlawed, and those who work on its behalf are prosecuted. Solidarnosc sources estimate that the authorities still hold two to three hundred political prisoners and are now preparing trials of seven leaders of Solidarnosc and four leaders of the Committee for Social Self-Defense (KOR).

This situation underscores the continuing denial of human rights in Poland. Yet, we have in recent weeks heard repeated reports that you are planning to relax the sanctions you imposed after the declaration of martial law--specifically with regard to Polish fishing rights and the rescheduling of Poland's debt payments.

The AFL-CIO would regard such a move as profoundly misguided and unwarranted. To return to business as usual would put the blessings of the United States on continuing repression in Poland. It can only encourage the hardliners in Warsaw and Moscow who have advocated the most repressive measures against the democratic forces in Poland in the conviction that the United States is incapable of sustaining a strong response. It would demoralize those most in need of assurance that they have the firm support of the world's greatest democracy--and not only rhetorical support. It would tell the world

-2-

that the United States accepts as more than "cosmetic" the lifting of martial law, which Solidarnosc has described as a "propaganda gesture, an attempt to mislead Polish society and international public opinion" and "intended to insure the rescheduling of credits and the lifting of sanctions by the West."

We are reliably informed that Solidarnosc has not changed its position and would be distressed if you were to relax the sanctions you imposed on December 23, 1981. At that time, the conditions you set for lifting the sanctions included the release of all political prisoners and the restoration of "the internationally recognized rights of the Polish people to free speech and association." These conditions have not been met.

I strongly urge that the sanctions be retained and that your policy toward Poland be guided by your original commitments.

Sincerely,



President